

Criteria Menu #12

Establish a School Health Council that discusses ways to meet Gold Medal Schools criteria at every meeting.



Definition: The school must establish a School Health Council that meets at least once a month to discuss important issues related to health, the school community, and ways to meet and maintain Gold Medal Schools criteria. The council's main purpose must be to discuss the school's health environment. Neither a School Community Council nor a District Wellness Council will qualify.

Resources

Promoting Healthy Youth, Schools, and Communities: A Guide to Community-School Health Councils

<http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/resources/AGuideToCommunitySchoolHealthCouncils.pdf>

Effective School Health Advisory Councils: Moving from Policy to Action, Public Schools of North Carolina

http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/resources/NC_SHAC_FINAL.pdf

Healthy Schools = Healthy Youth

http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/PED_13.asp?sitearea=PED



Assignments

School Coordinator Assignments

- Recruit members for the School Health Council
- Conduct meetings of the School Health Council
- Determine agendas of School Health Council meetings

Mentor Assignments

- Be an active member of the School Health Council
- Help determine agendas of School Health Council meetings
- Write a description for the mid-year and end-year reports



Criteria Menu #12 Ideas

- Plan meetings at times that are convenient for all members
- Write an agenda to ensure that all necessary topics are discussed
- Include students and make sure their ideas are accepted and used

School Health Council Description Template

A description must include specific details describing how the school completed the criteria. If you are writing a description for criteria that the school achieved in previous years please include a description of what the school is doing **this year** to maintain that level not what they did in previous years.

A Gold Medal Schools description does not require an Intent, Rationale, Reinforcement or the principal's signature. Use this template to write your description (all information is required).

A sample description for this criterion is provided on the next page.

The description must include...

- ☐ A list of members on the School Health Council
- ☐ A list of some meeting topics



School Health Council Description

Green Meadow Elementary has established a School Health Council that meets on the second Wednesday of each month during the school year. Members include:

Jan Smith, Principal
Kim Johnson, School Coordinator
Emily Carlson, Mentor
Craig Houston, Teacher
Diane Jones, Teacher
Alicia Rigby, Teacher
Curtis West, Student
Jenny Rands, Student
Lindsay Pryor, School Nurse
Cathy Banks, Parent
Brenda Lawson, Parent
Jackie Felix, Local Health Department Representative

The council discussed ways to improve the health of students and to meet Gold Medal Schools criteria at each meeting. Meeting topics included: improving the GMM track, providing a salad bar at lunch time, reducing bullying on the playground, promoting Red Ribbon week, enforcing GMS policies, etc.

Additional Resources

Successful School Health Councils

Let's get together and see what kind of a life we can build for our children.

- Chief Sitting Bull, Sioux

Definition of a School Health Council

1. A school health council is like a school district's mother
2. It combines parent insight with professional expertise, uses the experiences and concerns of both to identify problems and issues, to develop solutions and interventions and to advocate for them

Beginning a Successful Council

1. Make sure you understand the charge to the committee
2. Think about members – involve parents and experts
Make sure you think about why people would want to be on the council.
Ask:
 - What benefits are there to their participation?
 - How do they see the goals of the council?
 - Why are they coming to the meetings?
 - What will make them want to come to the next meetings?
3. Make sure that the school administration supports the council
4. Make sure that the school staff know you are on their side
5. Consider working with a health coordinator if you do not already have one.

Keep the Council Going

1. Spend time on team building
2. Choose issues to work on that the council can address and that appeal to parents of children of different ages.
3. Do not over-estimate **or** under-estimate your council's power
4. Figure out how to deal with controversy and people with "far out ideas"
5. Build allies
6. Try to be the only committee in one category
7. Communicate with clear agendas and minutes
8. Spread the leadership
9. Celebrate and recognize successes: glad letters, thank you letters

Overcoming Barriers in School Health Councils

Possible barrier: Too many committees

Ways to overcome barrier: Emphasize that councils are effective, eliminate overlap, and help kids achieve by improving health. Make sure that you have some strong, well-respected people on board, never forget to solicit the support of the people with power. Remind people “healthy kids make better students.” Have some visible accomplishments.

Discussing Issues

Possible Issue: This issue was raised by parents, pediatricians, and school nurses concerned about childhood obesity and what is served for lunch. As the committee looked into the issue, members learned how much junk food is served and sold for lunch. Another member started a school based nutrition committee. Other SHAD members worked with the school they represented to generate ideas for improving the school lunches and reducing the junk food sold. They met with our food services director, school by school, to change what is sold in the schools. One parent has developed a snack policy that will eventually be used district wide. Another member became very concerned about soft drink machines in the schools. The SHAC began to work on this. The initial parent worked with her school to remove a coke machine and replace it with one that sells juice and water. She has worked with our state senator on a bill to tax soft drinks (not successful).

Other Issues: Heavy back packs, pesticide use in the schools, substance abuse, mental health and stress management, sex ed, sports injuries, medications in the schools, air quality, school nurses, health ed, recess before lunch, HIV, character education, bullying, and now, the overall action plan.